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ABSTRACT

A study replicating a previous experiment and study, Bean, Bishop and Leuer (1982), examined the usefulness of the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in measuring change in teachers' theoretical orientation to the reading process as a result of inservice education. Subjects, 12 elementary school teachers who attended a nine day summer workshop on teaching reading and language arts in the primary grades, completed the TORP measure before and after the workshop. Six other teachers enrolled in a concurrent but unrelated workshop also completed the measure as a control. As in the previous study, the results indicated that the reading/language arts workshop participants significantly altered their pretest beliefs about the reading process towards a whole language orientation and away from an isolated phonics orientation. The control group's orientation did not change significantly, supporting the view that it was, in fact, the content of the reading workshop that was responsible for the attitude change. Although the study does not answer the question of whether the teachers involved acted in congruence with their changed beliefs, it does demonstrate the usefulness of the TORP measure in assessing teachers' beliefs about reading, and of using a summer workshop format to effect significant change in such beliefs. (HTH)

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THE EFFECT OF A SUMMER WORKSHOP ON TEACHERS' THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO THE TEACHING OF READING

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TEACHERS' THEORETCAL ORIENTATION TO READING

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Recently Bean, Bishop and Leuer (1982) reported a study in which they determined the degree to which teacher beliefs about the reading process were affected by attending a week-end mini-conference which focussed on classroom application of findings from contemporary psycholinguistic research. The keynote speaker and workshop leader at the mini-conference was Dr. Yetta Goodman, a widely respected proponent of language based reading instruction. Using an adaptation of DeFord's (1978) Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in a pretest/posttest format, Bean, Bishop and Leuer found that the group of 88 teachers in their sample, as a result of attending the mini- conference, significantly altered their pretest beliefs about the reading process in favor of a whole language orientation.

The present study was undertaken to replicate the Bean, Bishop and Leuer study in a somewhat different setting and to further test the usefulness of the TORP in measuring change in teachers' theoretical orientation to the reading process as a result of inservice education.

Methods

Subjects

The subjects were 12 male and female teachers who voluntarily spent nine days attending a summer workshop entitled, "Teaching Reading and the Language Arts (K-3):

Theory and Practice". The workshop was co-sponsored by the curriculum committee of a Canadian private school system and The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta. Table 1 summarizes the training and teaching experience characteristics of this group of teachers.

Insert Table 1 about here

Workshop Program

The nine day workshop was conducted over a two week period beginning on a Tuesday of week one and ending on Friday of week two with five hour sessions each day.

On the first day of the workshop Dr. Robert Bruinsma, a member of the Education faculty at The King's College, outlined competing approaches to the teaching of elementary reading and language arts. He emphasized the differences among bottom-up, skills hierarchy approaches, top-down, meaning centered approaches and a whole language interactionist approach. (See Quandt, 1983: 256-267 for a brief summary of the distinctives of each approach.) The following eight days of workshops were conducted by a master elementary language arts teacher[1] with more than 15 years of teaching experience who had done recent graduate work in reading education and serves as a K-4 language arts consultant for the school system that co-sponsored the workshop. Her sessions focussed on providing information about whole language instruction, modelling teaching strategies, and

helping each teacher participant design a month-long teaching unit for personal classroom use. Text resources for the workshop were McCracken and McCracken (1979), Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena and Buchanan (1984) as well as numerous trade books and professional magazines and journals.

Instrument

In order to evaluate any changes in teacher beliefs about the reading process and the teaching of reading over the duration of the workshop, DeFord's (1985) Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) was administered in a pretest/posttest format. This instrument is a 28 item survey that reflects the beliefs and practices outlined in a variety of beginning reading programs representing three theoretical orientations to reading. The TORP includes 10 statements representing a phonics orientation (items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 20, 21, & 23), eight representing a linguistic or whole language orientation (items 5, 7, 15, 17, 23, 26, 27 & 28), and 10 that reflect a skills hierarchy perspective (items 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 24, & 25).

The TORP has been shown to consistently differentiate teachers according to their individual theoretical orientation to the reading process and through use of descriptive data, factor analysis and discriminant analysis, it has been proven a reliable, valid instrument (DeFord, 1985). In the Bean, Bishop and Leuer (1982) study, an adaptation of the TORP was used (the Bishop adaptation) in which the length of

the instrument was reduced to 23 items and it was prefaced with a section used to gather pertinent information about the conference participants. The present study used the TORP as published by DeFord (1985) but also contained a section used to gather relevant professional data about workshop participants (see Table 1 for a summary of these data).

A Likert scale ranging from one to five degrees measuring strong agreement to strong disagreement was applied to each statement response. Thus, possible total scores ranged from a low of 28, implying little faith in a whole language view of reading, to a high of 140, indicating a strong alliance with a whole language perspective. (Note that in scoring the instrument, items 5, 7, 15, 17, 23, 26, 27 & 28 are to be transformed in order reflect the desired continuum from strong phonics orientation to strong whole language orientation.)

Procedures

On the first morning of the workshop the TORP was administered to the 12 subjects as pretest. The teachers were each given a number and instructed to place their number on the survey. At the same time a group of six other teachers who were enrolled in an unrelated Philosophy of Education workshop also completed the survey. These six teachers served as a control group to the reading workshop participants. On the last afternoon of the two-week workshop period, both experimemtal and control groups once again completed the TORP, this time as posttest, each again

placing their assigned number on the survey so that the pre and posttest surveys could be matched up.

Results

All 28 statement responses were added together yielding a total score for each of the 12 experimental and the six control subjects on the pre and posttest administrations of the TORP. In addition, the statement responses identified by DeFord (1985:358) as the "phonics orientation" and the "whole language orientation" were added together separately to yield two subtest totals for the pre and posttest administrations. Since the study by Bean, Bishop and Leuer (1982) indicated that a mini-conference emphasizing a particular view of the reading process resulted in a significant change in teachers' beliefs in the anticipated direction, it was predicted in the present study that the nine day reading/-language arts workshop would do the same, while the nine day philosophy course would have no appreciable effect on these teachers' orientation to the reading process. One-tailed t-tests comparing the pre and posttest means on the total TORP as well as on the two TORP subsections for the experimental group, revealed significant differences in excess of $p < .01$ while similar two-tailed t-test analyses on the pre and posttest means for the control group revealed no significant differences (all $ps > .10$) . The results of the experimental group are summarized in Table 2 below:

Insert Table 2 about here

The responses on the posttest administration of the TORP indicated that reading/language arts workshop participants significantly altered their pretest beliefs about the reading process in the predicted direction towards a whole language orientation and away from an isolated phonics orientation. This result is reflected both in the change in group mean for the TORP considered as a whole as well as in changes in group means for those parts of the TORP that were designed to specifically measure the phonics and whole language orientations. This latter fact is significant because it demonstrates that the overall change is not due simply to teachers moving to the middle "skills" position from the other two orientations, but rather that a genuine shift of orientation occurred away from the "phonics" position towards the "whole language" position. The fact that the control group's orientation did not significantly change is further support for the view that it was, in fact, the content of the reading/language arts workshop that was responsible for the change in teachers' beliefs about the reading process.

Discussion

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile is an instrument developed to sample a teacher's theory of the world of reading. The present study has confirmed that elementary teachers will alter their beliefs about the

reading process as a result of participating in an intensive nine day workshop focussing on the practical implications of a whole language view of reading and the language arts.

Studies of the relationship between theories that teachers hold about reading and their classroom practices have reported mixed results (Bawden, Buike & Duffy, 1979; DeFord, 1981; Kamil & Pearson, 1979; Martoncik, 1981; Mitchell, 1980). Harste and Burke's (1977) work suggests that a teacher's theoretical view of the reading process strongly influences instructional practices and children's developing perceptions about reading. They propose that a teacher's theoretical orientation establishes expectancies and influences goals, procedures, materials selection and classroom interaction patterns. Smith (1975:11) uses the metaphor of constructing a "theory of the world in the head" to similarly argue that humans seldom act in random fashion but instead interpret events in the light of their "theory" and similarly guide their actions by it. New information is organized, reorganized and acted upon so as to create an orderly, unified and consistent description of the world.

Although this small study does not answer the question of whether the teachers involved acted in congruence with their changed beliefs, it does demonstrate the usefulness of the TORP in assessing teachers' beliefs about reading and in using a summer workshop format to effect significant change in such beliefs. In view of the fact that one of the outcomes of the workshop was the preparation of a

substantial teaching unit by each participant, it may well be that these units, as well as the direction and magnitude of the change in beliefs about the reading process as measured by the TORP, will result in significant change in reading and language arts instruction in these teachers' classrooms.

Footnote

1. The author would like to express his thanks to Ms. Eleanor Mills, Assistant Principal of West Edmonton Christian School, for her assistance in data gathering and preparation of this paper.

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Table 1

Characteristics

of the Teachers in the Experimental Group (n=12)

Characteristic	Range	S.D.	Mean
Current grade placement	K - 4		
Grades taught during career	K - 7		
No. of yrs. of teaching exp.	0 - 13	4.0	3.8
No. of yrs. of university	1.5 - 5	.8	3.9
No. of read/lang arts courses	1.0 - 10	2.5	4.2

Table 2

Pre and Posttest Results on the TORP for the Experimental Group (n=12)

TORP Component	Mean	S.D.	t
Total pretest	81.25	9.64	
Total posttest	89.00	12.21	4.54*
Phonics pretest	27.67	6.47	
Phonics posttest	31.08	6.67	3.62**
Whole language pretest	23.00	3.16	
Whole language posttest	20.83	2.92	2.66***

*p<.001. **p<.005. ***p<.01, all one-tailed

APPENDIX

The DeFord
Theoretical Orientation to Reading
Profile (TORP)

Source: Reading Research Quarterly, 1985, 20(3), 351-367

The DeFord

Theoretical Orientation to Reading

Profile (TORP)

Name _____ Date _____

Present grade assignment _____

Grades taught during career _____

No. of years of teaching experience _____

No. of years of university _____

No. of reading/language arts courses taken _____

Directions: Read the following statements, and circle one of the responses that will indicate the relationship of the statement to your feelings about reading and reading instruction.

(select *one* best answer that reflects the strength of agreement or disagreement).

	SA	2	3	4	SD
1. A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
2. An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
3. Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
4. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
5. Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
6. When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
7. It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
8. The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD
9. Reversals (e.g., saying "saw" for "was") are significant problems in the teaching of reading.	1	2	3	4	5
	SA				SD

10.	It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
11.	It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
12.	Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understanding story content.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
13.	It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
14.	Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
15.	When coming to a word that's unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess upon meaning and go on.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
16.	Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
17.	It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
18.	Flashcard drills with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
19.	Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho ' to graph, pho to' gra phy, and pho to gra' phic) should be developed as part of reading instruction.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
20.	Controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat) is a means by which children can best learn to read.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
21.	Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
22.	Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
23.	Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
24.	Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
25.	It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
26.	If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
27.	It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD
28.	Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped)	1 2 3 4 5 SA SD